DESCRIPTION OF THE GREEK LETTERS

THE Greeks do not read backward from right to left as the Hebrews do, but from left to right as the Latins & French do. In the Greek language there are twenty-four letters, the names of which follow: *Alpha, Vita, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zita, Ita, Thita, Iota, Cappa, Lambda, Mi, Gni, Xi, Omicron, Pi, Rho, Sigma, Taf, Ypsilon, Phi, Chi, Psi,* and *Omega.* The said twenty-four letters are made as follows in capitals: Α, Β, Γ, Δ, Ε, Ζ, Η, Θ, Ι, Κ, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ξ, Ο, Π, Ρ, Σ, Τ, Υ, Φ, Χ, Ψ, Ω; & in small letters, called cursive letters, as follows: α, β, γ, δ, ε, ζ, η[ϩ], θ, ι, κ[ϰ], λ, μ, ν, ξ, ο, π, ϱ, σ, τ, υ, φ, χ, ψ, ω; whereof the value and pronunciation are as follows: *Alpha* is equivalent to an A; *Vita* is equivalent to B, and sometimes to V consonant; *Gamma* is equivalent to G, *Delta* to D; *Epsilon* is an E pronounced short; *Zita* is equivalent to Esd, that is to say, Z; *Ita* is equivalent to an I long in metrical quantity, and is often changed from Greek into Latin for a long E; *Thita* is equivalent to Th; *Iota* is I, always a vowel in Greek (in Latin and in French the letter I is sometimes a consonant); *Cappa* is sometimes equivalent to K, sometimes to C, & sometimes to the letter Q; *Lambda* is equivalent to the letter L, *Mi* to M, and *Gni* to N; *Xi* is equivalent to X; *Omicron* is equivalent to short O; *Pi* is equivalent to P, *Rho* to R, *Sigma* to S, *Taf* to T; *Ypsilon* is equivalent to I pronounced softly, for it must be pronounced much more softly than the Latin vowel I; *Phi* is equivalent to Ph, *Chi* to Ch, *Psi* to Ps, and *Omega* to a long O.

These twenty-four letters are divided, first of all, into two parts, vowels and consonants. The vowels are seven in number, as follows: *Alpha, Epsilon, Ita, Iota, Omicron, Ypsilon,* and *Omega:* Α, Ε, Η, Ι, Ο, Υ, Ω. The consonants are seventeen in number, that is to say: *Vita, Gamma, Delta, Zita, Thita, Cappa, Lambda, Mi, Gni, Xi, Pi, Rho, Sigma, Taf, Phi, Chi, Psi.* Β, Γ, Δ, Ζ, Θ, Κ, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ξ, Π, Ρ, Σ, Τ, Φ, Χ, Ψ, & in small letters, β, γ, δ, ζ, θ, κ[ϰ], λ, μ, ν, ξ, π, ϱ, σ, τ, φ, χ, ψ.

Of the seven vowels, two are primarily long in metrical quantity, and these are *Ita* and *Omega:* Η, Ω, η, ω. Two are short—*Epsilon,* that is to say, short E without an aspirate, and *Omicron,* that is to say, short O: Ε, Ο, ε, ο. There are also three common ones, which may sometimes be long in quantity and sometimes short; and these are *Alpha, Iota,* and *Ypsilon:* Α, Ι, Υ, α, ι, υ. Of these seven vowels six proper diphthongs can be made: for from *Alpha* and *Iota* is made the diphthong ΑΙ, αι; of *Alpha* and *Ypsilon* is made the diphthong ΑΥ, αυ; of *Omicron* and *Iota* is

made ΟΙ, οι; of *Epsilon* and *Ypsilon,* ΕΥ, ευ; of *Epsilon* and *Iota,* ΕΙ, ει; and of *Omicron* & *Ypsilon* ΟΥ, ου. These proper diphthongs are pronounced, Ae, Af, Ef, I, and O. Besides these five* proper diphthongs there are four improper ones, and they are called improper because they are not formed of two separate vowels, but the last vowel is in some sort lessened in its size or changed in plan. These improper diphthongs are four in number & are made as follows: The first is made of the whole *Alpha* and of *Iota,* only half as tall as the said *Alpha;* and in small letters it is made of the whole *Alpha* and of the *Iota* changed into a very small point and placed under the middle of the said *Alpha* thus: Αι, αι; and this diphthong thus made is pronounced like A.

The second improper diphthong is written as a capital with *Ita,* & *Iota* following it only half as tall as *Ita;* in small letters *Iota* is converted into a small point placed under the middle of the said *Ita,* thus: Ηι, ηι; and this diphthong thus written is pronounced like long I.

The third improper diphthong as a capital is made with *Omega,* and with *Iota* following of half the size of the *Omega;* in small letters the *Iota* is changed into a small point placed directly under the middle of the *Omega,* thus: Ωι, ωι; and this is pronounced like long O.

The fourth and last improper diphthong, in capitals, is made of the *Ypsilon* and of *Iota* only half its size; but in small letters the *Iota* must be attached to the *Ypsilon* behind, and have its tail hanging below the lower limb of the *Ypsilon,* thus: Υι, υι; and this improper diphthong is pronounced like *Ypsilon,* half soft and half hard.

The rest of the Greek letters, as I have said before, are all consonants and are seventeen in number, of which eight are semi-vowels; *Zita, Xi, Psi, Lambda, Mi, Gni, Rho,* & *Sigma,* which are formed thus: Ζ, Ξ, Ψ, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ρ, Σ; of which semi-vowels three are double, Ζ, Ξ, & Ψ, and four liquid, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ρ. The other consonants are mutes and these are nine in number: Β, Γ, Δ, Κ, Π, Τ, Θ, Φ, & Χ; of which three are not aspirated: Κ, Π, and Τ; three are aspirated: Θ, Φ, and Χ; and three are medial, that is to say, half not aspirated and half aspirated: Β, Γ, and Δ.

Of all these twenty-four letters hereinbefore enumerated & made in their proper shapes, syllables can be made and from syllables, words, & in like manner from words, discourses, as you can see abundantly in the grammar of Constantine Lascaris, of Chrysoloras, of the learned and elegant Urban, of Theodosius Gaza, and of many other noble and exalted authors both ancient and modern.

* *Tory names six but gives the pronunciation of only five, omitting OI.*